



**To: Mr. Fabián Salvioli**  
**The UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth,**  
**Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees for Non-Recurrence**

*Dear M. Fabián Salvioli,*

In recent years, the global stage has borne witness to an array of human rights violations, leaving a trail of immense suffering in their wake. Among the various instances of human rights violations, one particularly compelling and yet frequently overlooked case pertains to the dire circumstances faced by the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. They have endured, for the last three decades, substantial human rights violations at the hands of unrecognized secessionist authorities, rendering their predicament a matter of grave concern within the sphere of international human rights advocacy.

**CAP Freedom of Conscience**, an established European NGO with Consultative Status at the United Nations since its inception in 1995, have steadfastly dedicated itself to the collection of testimonials documenting discrimination and human rights violations affecting diverse communities. In this specific context, we have launched the "**Karabakh Human Rights Awareness Campaign**" last year to increase global awareness of human rights violations in Karabakh. Within the framework of the campaign, we have consistently monitored the situation, unveiling the human rights violations that Karabakh Armenians endured under the "gray zone" ruled by the secessionist regime, and ensuring the restoration of their rights.

In anticipation of your forthcoming visit to Armenia, we earnestly beseech your attention to the exigent issue at hand. It is our fervent plea that you extend your invaluable assistance in addressing the myriad challenges faced by the Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian community, which has endured significant tribulations over the course of the past three decades. The most recent and grievous ordeal, an event of critical magnitude, occurred a mere month ago, resulting in the mass exodus of over 100,000 individuals from the region. With this now dispersed and displaced, the necessity for international attention and support has never been more pronounced.

The protracted conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh boasts a long and complex historical trajectory, dating back to the late 1980s. The region has remained a focal point of territorial disputes and volatile confrontations, ultimately escalating in the early 1990s, culminating in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. This war led to the occupation of internationally recognized Azerbaijani territories and the subsequent establishment of an unrecognized separatist entity called the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic".

Over the course of the past three decades, from the prospective of international law, Nagorno-Karabakh existed as a '**gray legal zone**' that largely remained shielded from international scrutiny owing to its ambiguous legal status. This lack of international engagement engendered an environment wherein fundamental human rights were persistently and wantonly violated. The lack of accountability had granted the secessionist authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh (notoriously known as Karabakh clan) carte blanche to trample upon the rights of the local population with impunity, as legal consequences remained elusive. Investigative research found that Nagorno-Karabakh functioned as ground zero for another form of war, the festering global epidemic of opiates, loophole for all sorts of illegal smuggling- from arms to drugs, further fueled conflict thus emboldening local semi-criminal clan to exploit its local residents.

Moreover, Nagorno-Karabakh, during this period, were acting as a heavily fortified '**garrison territory**', with the highest level of militarization anywhere in the world. This extensive illegal military presence effectively held the local population in a state of captivity, subjecting them to the authority of former warlords who maintained dominion through the wielding of military force. The extreme militarization of the region had resulted in a

dire and disconcerting humanitarian situation, wherein the civilian populace existed in a perpetual state of apprehension, enduring the constant specter of violence and insecurity.

In rare leaks into international media exposed disturbing revelations that emerged, shedding light on a harrowing aspect of the early years of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was disclosed that prominent political figures, among them former Armenian presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, resorted to the use of terror tactics to instill widespread fear and panic among those who did not align with their ethno-centric nationalist ideology. This deliberate exploitation of fear and intimidation as instruments of political manipulation has cast a long shadow over the lives of the region's inhabitants, leaving indelible emotional scars.

Speaking of ruling with military fist, it is imperative to underscore the historical backdrop of Nagorno-Karabakh, where political opposition has, for years, been met with heavy-handed authoritarian measures. ***Mr. Rapporteur***, it is essential to acknowledge the vivid recollections of many Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians regarding the stark reality that unfolded under the former so-called Minister of Defense, Samvel Babayan. He not only orchestrated the repression of political dissidents but also directly ordered the physical assault of individuals who dared to voice their opposition to the ruling regime. Regrettably, this serves as just one illustration among a litany of egregious violations.

Furthermore, the prevalence of military '***dedovshchina***,' a deeply entrenched system of brutal hazing and abuse within the military ranks, has cast a long shadow over the service experiences of countless soldiers. This widespread phenomenon has regrettably resulted in the severe injury and, tragically, even the loss of lives of these servicemen during their time of duty. To substantiate the gravity of this issue, we can reference a recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (Hovhannisyan and Karapetyan vs Armenia). This legal judgment provides a stark portrayal of the extent of military abuse inflicted upon ordinary soldiers by the local separatist military authorities.

The year 2020 witnessed a significant downturn in the challenging situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, as separatist authorities implemented a series of increasingly restrictive

measures that further compounded the plight of the local population. Notably, a disconcerting incident unfolded involving the former self-proclaimed state minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, Ruben Vardanyan, a billionaire tycoon whose actions sent shockwaves through the community. It was reported that Vardanyan ordered the **brutal beating of an individual** named Yuri Musaelyan, an act of violence that took place right before Musaelyan's family, exacerbating the trauma of this ordeal.

What is particularly alarming is that Vardanyan's actions did not stop at physical violence; he openly and brazenly advocated for the execution of individuals who expressed a willingness to engage in dialogue with Azerbaijani authorities. This chilling declaration further solidified a climate of fear and suppression that cast a long shadow over the region.

Given the gravity of these pressing concerns, we earnestly beseech the UN Special Rapporteur to use the platform of his visit to Armenia as an opportunity to bring the dire situation that Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians have faced to the forefront. This pivotal moment provides a unique and influential forum for raising awareness and advocating for action on the critical issues that continue to afflict this already vulnerable population.

We propose the following questions to be raised during your visit:

**a) Is the Armenian government ready to initiate criminal inquiries into the conduct of secessionist Nagorno-Karabakh representatives who have sought sanctuary within Yerevan?**

**b) Is the Armenian government inclined to engage with Azerbaijani authorities for the purpose of pursuing legal actions against former Nagorno-Karabakh leaders presently imprisoned in Baku?**

In summation, we earnestly beseech the UN Special Rapporteur to cast a spotlight on the critical imperative for accountability and justice with regards to Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. Over the span of several decades, the inhabitants of this region have borne the heavy burden of enduring pervasive violence, grievous human rights violations, and enduring political unrest at the hands of the local secessionist regime. The time has come for

the international community to step forward and take meaningful actions that can alleviate their suffering and comprehensively address the persistent challenges that continue to afflict this community.

Yours sincerely,

Thierry Valle,

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience CAP  
(Freedom of Conscience),

Also on behalf of the Karabakh Human Rights Campaign